

Hearings on Religious Persecution in China: Wei Jingsheng

March 16, 2000

(Note: These are unedited and uncorrected transcripts)

Wei Kingsheng

MR. WEI: Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members, it is quite consistent that Chinese Communist Party treating the human rights issue and religious freedoms issues. Every since 49 their goal is to quash the religious groups. When historical evidence is that in the '50's and '60's while they're a deceitful clan, were quite successful; and at that time they almost vanquished all religious sects. Ever since the '70's, people start to regroup, and they try to start picking up the religious beliefs. In the '70's they still arrest religious leaders, and so their tactics were similar to what they had before. And therefore the development of the regular Christian, Buddhism, Islam, and some other not traditional religions have developed quite rapidly during the '70's.

Another thing worth noting is the so-called Qigong which is somewhat associated with religion, but is also associated with health. The Qigong sectors are using two primary ways of attracting people. One is quite self-evident, is that by practicing Qigong, it is good to Page (of transcript) your health. Another is that it's a mutual protection among the mass. As the hardship and difficulty increases, the Qigong members help each other out, and this is the strength of the membership. And, however, different Qigong groups have their own doctrines and beliefs. They may say different things; however, I think the commonality among them is what I said before, primarily they have these two functions.

As the groups, the religious and Qigong groups rapidly develop, this causes an apprehension of the Chinese Communist Party, and then they develop some new measures to try to control these developments. On the one side, the scope by suppression by force, as the scope is getting bigger and bigger. Another is to smear those groups with very negative propaganda by saying they are traitors, they are cults, and they try to destroy their reputation.

The problem is adverse to those religious and Qigong group that they do not have the freedom of speech; and, therefore, they have no opportunity to rebut the smear campaign by the government. And so those religious followers gradually awoken to effect. So in addition to fight for the religious belief freedoms, we have at the same time to fight for the human rights for all people.

Such realization is not being -- paying enough attention by the international circles, because the many western religious people feel that they are fighting for their religious freedom and it is a loose connection rather than a very close one with the human rights issue. So religious leaders from abroad went to China and talked specifically and fight for opportunity to get permission of that particular religious belief to be practiced in China, and they will not link that with the human rights in general. And some political leaders do similar things, and I think this is wrong.

If we do not have a close connection between the two, then you are weakening your position. And I've been talking to the leaders from the Buddhism, Islam, Christians in China. We talk about this very issue. So that's my general comment.

Thank you very much for the special opportunity.